Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Collaborative Arts Middle School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 29Q355
145-00 Springfield Boulevard
Queens
NY 11413

Principal: Tammy Holloway

Dates of Review:
May 15, 2018 and May 17, 2018

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Collaborative Arts Middle School serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
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</tbody>
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### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations connected to the instructional focus and professional development. Faculty has established a culture for learning that systematically communicates a belief and vision of high expectations related to college preparedness for all students and their families.

Impact
Through instructional rounds and professional development, staff hold themselves accountable for strategies that embed high expectations into lessons across grades and subject areas. Students own their educational experience and are prepared for high school because of clear guidance and supports.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders in conjunction with teachers have negotiated for additional teacher team meetings to allow for increased collaborative opportunities for Common Core Learning Standards aligned-planning, professional development, and collective problem solving all aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers across grades and content areas, meet to plan with co-teachers supporting the development of scaffolds and learning opportunities for all students, including students with disabilities. The principal also communicates expectations for lesson planning and data-driven decision making through weekly newsletters, emails, and strategic instructional rounds. Feedback is regularly provided to and amongst teachers so they hold themselves and their peers accountable for meeting their collaborative planning expectations.

- Effective ongoing professional development is led by teachers. Several recent workshops have focused on Response to Intervention (Rti) efforts and closing the achievement gap. Other workshops are designed to ensure all staff understands how to create lesson plans using online shared documents or a universal toolbox.

- Parents and family members are integral in supporting how their children learn best in student-centered classrooms, which aligns with the schools’ instructional focus. Parent Teacher Association reports highlight all content areas and grade level Common Core Learning Standards aligned to best practices that support student progress towards meeting those expectations. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are presented with challenges that require significant application and critical thinking thus allowing them to express themselves. Parents also note they are made aware of their child’s progress through a variety of communications, including teacher texts, online student management system, progress reports, and phone calls.

- Students have clear ownership of their educational journey and are able to articulate an understanding of how staff systematically define those expectations through the online platform used by everyone. One student shared that teachers ensure they are made aware of their progress, areas for improvement, and set goals with them to meet. Furthermore, when goals are met for groups of students, they occasionally celebrate with a pizza party. Students also noted their teachers are “getting us ready for high school” [by] “challenging ourselves with work we would do in high school.”
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for students to help them when completing work assignments.

Impact

Although questioning strategies were utilized during lessons, high levels of student thinking are limited through uneven efforts to provide appropriately challenging tasks that address the needs of a diversity of learners as evidenced in student work products, classroom discussion and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade seven humanities lesson, students engaged in a close reading to determine attitudes towards consumerism. Students read excerpts and identified how and why attitudes towards having and wanting things has changed over time. The teacher modeled how to identify the attitude and reasoning in the excerpt on the interactive white board. However, the model was previously annotated with highlights and notes in the margins demonstrating possible justifications. Although the model was thorough, many students were disengaged and passively following along with the rapid presentation. Furthermore, when students moved into the activity with assigned peers, their reasoning did not reflect critical thinking and was primarily limited to the rationale of acquiring things “just because they want it.”

- In a science class, students engaged in a learning target that involved calculating the density of a chocolate bar using a triple beam balance and ruler. However, most students did not know the formula to determine density although it was provided on their lab instructional sheet and displayed in the front of the classroom. Additionally, students did not have a proper understanding of how to use a triple beam balance or measure the volume of a regular shape. Explicit directions or steps to solve were not provided for students to support their learning and consistently demonstrate their thinking. Furthermore, although the lab was intended for students to engage in an activity that challenged their thinking by altering the volume of the chocolate bar, the slightly irregular shape of the bar did not support the lesson objective appropriately.

- All teachers asked students many questions throughout their lessons however, many of the questions did not lead to students using higher-order thinking skills. Low-level questions were asked of students attempting to understand the experiences immigrants and refugees feel regarding the loss of their home. The teacher asked, “What is home?” but only one student replied with a generic response. No further discussion or higher level questions were asked. Similarly, in a grade six math class, students were asked to respond with real world examples regarding where they would find value in the use of the concepts mean and median (average). Two students replied with museum and supermarket respectively, although no explanation was offered to expand their conceptual understanding.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions that align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, the instructional shifts, and real world application. Additionally, curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

A universally adopted lesson plan template supports cognitively engaging tasks, which coherently promotes access to college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents, including lesson and unit plans, highlights access to Common Core Learning Standards preparing students for success in high school, although execution of the lesson plans lacked consistent fidelity. A grade-six measurement and data lesson overview listed the learning objective, as students will be able to use measures of center to describe a data set. Background information is provided explaining the significance of the standard and relevant content vocabulary, including, measure of center, mean, median, and outlier. The lesson plan requires students to generate a slide presentation on a computer demonstrating their application of a real world problem provided to them. An advisory lesson plan includes the following learning objective: identify why adolescents’ emotions are especially intense, ultimately affecting decision making. The lesson design prepares students to think about the decisions they make rather than react to their emotions.

- The vast majority of teachers have adopted the schoolwide lesson plan template. The template primarily consists of the identification of relevant Common Core Learning Standards, the learning objective, language objective, and lesson background with a workshop model mini-lesson design to engage students in a variety of tasks. Additionally, differentiated approaches to meet the needs of students to promote coherence of content across grades and disciplines are typically listed as considerations and management needs. They may include accommodations and supports for particular students based on a review of prior work samples, class performance, or the Individualized Education Plan.

- Teachers align curricula; making adjustments and refinements by department after reviewing student work samples. For example, a team of humanities teachers reviewed data on a Common Core Learning Standards based task and concluded students needed support with a content specific instructional strategy to improve close reading skills. As such, teachers received professional development on close reading strategies (rereading deliberately and think-pair share), implemented the strategies, and followed up with protocol-based instructional rounds with peers to assess the effectiveness of the close reading strategies. The close reading strategies, although have not yet closed the achievement gap thoroughly, have resulted in providing students access to the content while improving cognitive engagement as evident by student samples compared over time.
### Findings

Across grades, teachers use a variety of assessment measures to align curricula and instruction with student progress toward goals and provide glows and grows on assignments. Additionally, benchmark assessments and teachers’ checks for understanding are ongoing.

### Impact

Actionable feedback provides students information on their achievement and baseline exams lead to curricular revisions. Instructional checks for understanding further lead to effective adjustments in order to meet student learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Most students receive feedback on their completed assignments from teachers and peers, in the form of glows and grows. Students reported rubric-based feedback informs them of what is important in order to achieve a certain grade according to the criteria. They further stated that they review those criteria in advance to plan accordingly in an attempt to achieve mastery. When students did not achieve mastery according to the defined criteria, they were fully able to articulate where they made errors or understood what to do next time to improve their grade. For example, one student explained during a recent short response assignment on allusions, she “got a two because my writing was too repetitive, which meant I used the word mislabel too much in my writing, but will resubmit within five days for a higher grade.”

- Teachers use a variety of common assessments to measure students’ progress toward proficiency of Common Core Learning Standards. For example, one Comprehensive Education Plan goal is to see an increase in English Language Arts (ELA) and math proficiency on state standardized tests. Benchmark assessment results show an increase in students’ ability to read closely to determine text meaning according to administration of a mock state exam, where students improved nearly eight percent in their reading to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences. Students also saw considerable growth in their application of number sense and operations across all three grades on mock exams. These increases in proficiency result from the focused RtI work and deeper curricular designed experiences.

- Checks for understanding during instruction are effective and timely, resulting in lesson adjustments. For example, during a social studies lesson, students reviewed a political cartoon and shared out what they noticed. The teacher circulated the classroom asking probing questions to groups so students were able to analyze the cartoon more critically. Similarly, during a math lesson, students worked to solve problems using the Pythagorean theory. Students reflected on their problem solving in groups and challenged one another’s thinking. The teacher noted a student who used an alternative approach to solving one problem and asked that they share their findings with the class. The class engaged in a brief discussion about how that approach leads to a subsequent lesson. Students regularly assessed themselves with rubrics and checklists to ensure they understood their work, and that the work of their peers was aligned to the learning objective.
Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Additionally, school leaders have a strategic and transparent system that uses teacher observations to design professional development and succession plans for staff.

**Impact**

Teacher support and supervision elevates school-wide instructional practices and implements strategies that promote professional growth.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Review of Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation forms demonstrates lesson-specific observed evidence used to rate teachers for each component connected to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Furthermore, additional evaluator notes are provided to each teacher that provide glows, grows, and next steps for future instructional implementation. Several next steps provided to a science teacher included, pre-craft some learning materials for certain students to have an appropriate access point while also utilizing a random selector tool to support an equal chance of participation for all. Similar next steps were provided to an ELA teacher, who was encouraged to preview a reading comprehension text with students while avoid teaching grammar simultaneously unless that is the targeted instruction. Supports including intervisitations, collegial planning, and professional resources are provided to ensure staff receive the support to achieve meeting those next steps.

- The professional development plan aligns with the school’s instructional focus to engage students in cooperative learning strategies. Teachers discuss their professional development plan with school leadership when making informed decisions regarding their own professional growth. For example, a first year teacher noted his immediate supervisor provided him with articles to read and videos to watch in alignment with his questioning and discussion techniques to engage students in conversation. These goals align with his professional learning goals determined by ongoing observations and the initial planning conference. Another teacher shared that the conference and workshops attended intentionally focused on the development of higher-order thinking questions. As such, the teacher intentionally embeds higher-order thinking questions strategically in his lesson-planning document. Teachers note the improvement with their instruction and APPR evaluation form ratings as evidence of achieving alignment with school-wide instructional practices and professional development.

- The professional development plan supports all teacher development and is tracked for purpose, targeted staff, type of development, and person responsible for facilitating. For example, a teacher-led professional development session targets all teachers for the purpose of developing learning objectives through understanding the needs of English Language Learners. Conversely, teacher mentors in small groups lead a new teacher professional development, to support those new to the profession with clarity regarding the culture and learning environment of middle school. Additional workshops are differentiated for new teachers to review lesson plans for key features of the normed lesson plan template to ensure coherence across grades and departments for all students exists. The strategic implementation of professional growth and reflection by both teachers and school leaders has resulted in a significant closing of the achievement gap for the lowest performing students in English and math assessment results.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations by department. Additionally, distributed leadership structures are in place for teachers to support improved student learning and best practices amongst themselves.

Impact

Department-level inquiry work has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers to promote student achievement and teacher pedagogy, especially toward the school goal of improved writing. Teachers have the opportunity to voice their ideas to impact key decisions that affect student learning across the school and their own professional experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- Inquiry teams meet as a department weekly to engage in protocols by looking at student work products, identifying student misconceptions, and reflecting on instructional practices to improve instruction. An observation of a math team meeting emphasized the instructional focus of shifting to a more student-centered learning environment. Several teachers noted when they design their lessons to be teacher-facilitated and student-centered, students perform better. The teachers provided examples of how they support their students’ self-assessment and use graphic organizers to deepen their understanding. However, teachers also acknowledge they need to allow for more modeling during instruction and establish clear roles for group tasks, especially to promote critical discussions.

- Minutes from prior inquiry meetings highlight teachers’ focus on supporting writing instruction using professional texts. Teachers identified several strategies including examining the relationship between selected pieces of evidence during pre-writing activities to support claims, ensure proper use of prepositional phrases, and check the use of transitions in paragraphs.

- Teachers support one another through leadership roles and the principal communicates a team model approach for school improvement. A group of teachers independently formed the Positive Behavioral Intervention System and structures, which have resulted in increased attendance, increased student satisfaction with their learning environment according to surveyed data, and less discipline referrals. Additionally, teachers formed and maintain committees leading to improvements in the shared storage and reflection of curricula online, restorative circles, community based organization work, and RtI book talks. Furthermore, professional development intervisitations are turn-keyed and supported by veteran teachers.